

The BLUE DOOR

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CHAPTER VI

"Elaine Chalmers, look where you're going! This path doesn't lead to the Dell!"

"You're telling me?" replied the tall girl in the lead. She looked back and blinked against the glare of a flashlight that covered her lovely face. Her eyes were as dark as the night itself, her hair was a burnished gold, shading into brown. Her skin was flawless, her lips "made." Like the other girls, she wore an evening wrap carelessly thrown over her dinner dress, yet the yellow velvet of her wrap seemed to dominate all those other pastel shades which surrounded her. "I meant to tell you, Hortense," she said, "we're not going to the Dell. Emerson's on the lookout. We're going to the birch grove."

There was an excited murmur from the four girls who followed. Hortense asked, "Can the new girls find us there?"

"I've attended to that, naturally," answered Elaine. Her voice was beautifully placed and very insistent. All her personality and her egotism vibrated through it.

The trail seemed never-ending. The flagstones ceased and five pairs of daintily shod feet skirted an 18-hole golf course and followed a mile of bridge-path before the birch grove was reached. Here they found five other figures awaiting them, and Elaine turned her flashlight full into each face for a relentless inspection. Each was breathless with excitement. Each was a beauty in her own right.

"O. K.," said Elaine's clear voice briefly. "Lay down your lights and join hands."

They obeyed, and the circle of 10 was broken only by the fact that Elaine's right hand retained her light. "We are here," she said impressively, "to add five lower classmen to our circle. This is customary. Last year five of us were taken in by the senior five who were graduating. In this way the circle of The Terrible Ten remains unbroken. It is fitting that you newcomers—Pamela, Kathryn, Barbara, Laura and Janice—should know something about the order you are entering into. It's not an ordinary sorority. It has no lofty or exalted aims. It is, as its founder designated it seven years ago, 'a cult for the conquest of the male.' It is fitting, too, that you should know something about this founder, so I shall tell you what I know, omitting only her name."

Hortense whispered in her ear, "Get on with it, Elaine! My feet are killing me—"

"Well," said Elaine, "The Terrible Ten was founded by the most beautiful girl who ever attended Graycastle. Though she was terribly popular, she made the mistake of actually falling in love. The man was some years her senior and he jilted her to marry a mere nobody—a woman almost as old as himself who had nothing but brains to recommend her. After that our heroine formed this secret circle by asking nine congenial girls to join her. Their object was the glorification of feminine charm and annexation of male admirers."

She paused to sweep her flashlight from face to face and saw that the new girls were properly impressed. This was the very center of her little kingdom and she meant to rule it. "And now," she said, "the older five will repeat our creed, which the incoming members will say after us."

"I was made beautiful," chanted five soft voices, "for the conquest of the male!" Like an echo the five new girls repeated the words, speaking them with a sort of hesitant awe.

Then came another amazing assertion, chanted by Elaine and Hortense and their three associates: "It is my privilege as a beautiful woman to win as many declarations of love and as many proposals of marriage as possible!"

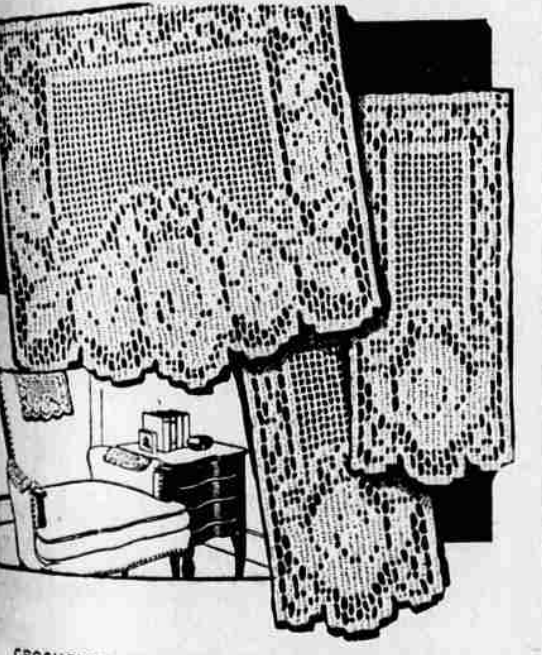
This was repeated with even greater intensity by the new girls.

"Very good," said Elaine. "Now for our oath: We swear to pursue our careers of coquetry and masculine conquest to life's end! Amen."

(To Be Continued)

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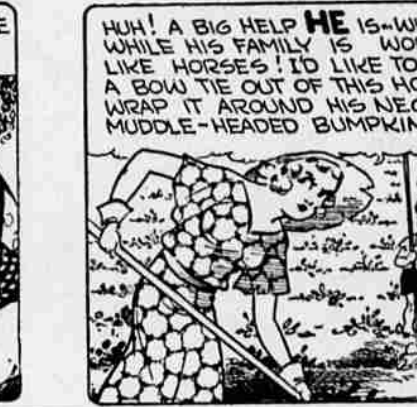
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